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Recent Developments In Luther Research: Implications for the Adventist Understanding of Christ Our Righteousness

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On June 1, 1996, a seminar took place at St. Olaf College in Minnesota that introduced to the English speaking world a radical revision of the Lutheran understanding of Luther, constituting what appears to be a breakthrough in Luther research. The major papers were read by Finnish scholars from the Systematic Theology Department of the University of Helsinki, led by Professor Tuomo Mannermaa, and presented the results of intense research that began in the mid-seventies.¹

The impetus for this research was provided by the ecumenical dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, begun during the Archbishopric of Martti Simojoki in the early seventies. Simojoki charged the theological faculty at the University of Helsinki with the task of finding a point of contact on the basis of which the discussions might proceed.²

Of particular interest are the parallels between this new development in Luther research and the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Christ our righteousness, which Arthur G. Daniels referred to as “the one sublime message set forth in the Sacred Scripture.”³ For Lutherans, the work of Mannermaa and his colleagues constitutes a revolutionary reinterpretation of Luther’s theology,

¹ *Union With Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen, eds., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) is the published version of those lectures in the English language and includes responses by four American Luther scholars.

² Particularly in reference to the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*, that is to say, participation in God.

³ Arthur G. Daniels, *Christ Our Righteousness* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: The Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 1929), 15.

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the implications of which remain to be seen.⁴ For Seventh-day Adventists, it constitutes an affirmation of our understanding of Christ our righteousness as firmly anchored in the stream of the Reformation.

The Finnish Insights

Methodology. The Finnish scholars began with an analysis of the philosophical assumptions of traditional Luther studies, posing the questions: How does modern Luther scholarship understand the presence of Christ? and, What were the philosophical assumptions used in defining the nature of Christ's being present?

In seeking answers to these two questions, the Finnish scholars became aware of the significant influence of the philosopher Hermann Lotze (1817-1881) and the theologian Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) on the thinking of subsequent Luther scholars and theologians especially with reference to understanding the nature of being. According to Lotze's ontology and epistemology, only the effect of things can be understood. As far as our knowledge of things is concerned, we can only "know" them by how they affect us, rather than by any sense of their entering into us. In other words, that which knowledge grasps in the object is not real: only the effects are real.

With respect to the God/man relationship, Ritschl followed Lotze's philosophy directly. Christ's presence for the believer is the effect of God's will. This means God acts upon us in terms of His will, which then causes our actions. The union created is not that of being, but rather of willing. His will effects our wills, and we then act accordingly. That is to say, "Christ in us means therefore that we ourselves live a moral life for Him."⁵ Note that the emphasis is on "we ourselves." What this means is that union with Christ is not a reality in itself, but rather a union of divine and human wills. The Finns refer to this as transcendental effect orientation, which has determined the understanding of revelation, as well as the interpretation of Luther, for the past two centuries. Says Mannermaa, "On the basis of this tradition one can make hardly anything

⁴ It is to be expected that criticism of Mannermaa's views will appear, especially from the Lutheran right as represented by churches like the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod, for whom forensic justification is the primary focus. Such criticism did appear in the Finnish periodical *Concordia* (July-August, 1995): 8-12, in an article by H. Lehtonen entitled "Mannermaa: The Savior of Lutheranism?" (translated from the Finnish by Rodger N. Foltz). Lehtonen does not appreciate Mannermaa's critique of the *Formula of Concord*. For right wing Lutheranism the *Formula*, together with the other confessional documents in the *Book of Concord*, are valued because, rather than in-so-far-as, they represent the true exposition and understanding of Scripture. Right wing Lutheranism has also been suspicious of pietism and revival movements, which is reflected in Lehtonen's comment that "in the revival movements Mannermaa's Luther interpretation has found a responsive echo." Walter J. Kukkonen observed that the revival movements of Finland had a "keen interest in the works of Luther," and that "Modern Luther study in Finland has discovered the close affinity of the deeper insights of these movements to the central discoveries of Luther" (*The Lutheran Quarterly*, 10/1 [February 1958]: 38).

⁵ Mannermaa quoting Risto Saarinen in *Union With Christ*, 8.

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of those passages in Luther that speak of real participation in God.”⁶ Or of the apostle Paul, either.

Rejecting this philosophical presupposition and listening to Luther himself, the Finns concluded that Luther followed the Hebrew way of thinking in that the thing that is known is itself present in the one who knows. In Hebrew thought the attributes (“properties”) of God—such as righteousness, wisdom, power, holiness, joy, peace, eternal life, and love—constitute His essence. Based on this way of thinking, Luther understood that because God and His Son are one, these attributes are present in Christ, and due to the indwelling Christ the believer is able to share those attributes. On this basis Luther is able to say, “Thus the righteousness of Christ becomes our righteousness through faith in Christ, and everything that is his, even he himself, becomes ours . . . and he who believes in Christ clings to Christ and is one with Christ and has the same righteousness with him.”⁷ The believer has no righteousness of his own, but is made righteous because of Christ’s righteousness. Hence for Luther, this oneness with Christ, or union with Christ, constitutes being.

This being is never static, because God is always creating. Being is a continuous reception of God’s gifts in which Christ is present and in which Christ Himself is given. Thus the believer is always being born and renewed. Luther understands this relationally: The Christian is “in Christ,” understood not only forensically but really. The medium (or means) of spiritual existence “is not the event of ‘forensic justification’ but the divine person of Christ.”⁸ In other words, Christ is the spiritual existence of the believer.

With respect to methodology, the Finns did not begin where much of contemporary Lutheranism begins, with the *Formula of Concord*⁹ or with subsequent philosophical assumptions concerning being, but with Luther himself, who began with Scripture. They did not ignore what they found to be Luther’s ontology, but went beyond the traditional idea that faith is an act of the will, volitional obedience, with no ontological implications.

Justification. I remember quite vividly when the Lutheran World Federation, meeting in Helsinki in 1963, was unable to produce a satisfactory statement on justification because of the inability to answer the modern question, “Does

⁶ *Union With Christ*, 9.

⁷ Quoted in *Union With Christ*, 6.

⁸ Sammeli Juntunen, “Luther and Metaphysics” in *Union With Christ*, 153. Juntunen refers to this insight as “Luther before Lutheranism.” If Juntunen and his colleagues are correct, Lutheranism has been Luther’s worst enemy.

⁹ Luther died in 1547. The *Formula of Concord* was completed in 1577, becoming the final section of the *Book of Concord*, which was published in June, 1580, the fiftieth anniversary of the first reading of the Augsburg Confession. The intent and purpose of the *Formula of Concord* was to settle the controversies over Reformation doctrine that had arisen following the death of Luther and secure a united Lutheran front against Roman Catholic pressure. The formulation and propagation of Lutheran doctrine and theology was now in the hands of the second generation of Lutheran Reformers, and the style of the *Formula* was decidedly scholastic.

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God exist?” The so-called sixteenth century question, assumed to be the underlying and central question for Luther—“How can a sinner find a gracious God?”—is not being asked today. They had no answer for the modern question because they were still looking at Luther through *Formula of Concord* glasses and missing his emphasis on the indwelling Christ. The Finns have helped Lutherans understand that the existence of God can be known not because we have found Him to be gracious, but because He has found us and has come to us in the Person of Christ, who is present in faith and who is our righteousness. Carl Braaten wonders if it makes any sense for Lutherans to continue holding justification as the chief doctrine of the Christian faith “if they are so unclear and in fact in wide disagreement about its material content.”¹⁰

The *Formula of Concord* states that the righteousness of Christ is “reckoned to us,” that it is “reckoned to faith,” that therefore sinners are “accounted righteous and holy by God,” that they are “regarded as holy and righteous through faith,” and that the “righteousness of faith before God consists solely in the gracious reckoning of Christ’s righteousness to us.”¹¹ The words “reckoned,” “accounted,” and “regarded” mean to consider or impute. Then, however, in the same section the *Formula* states that “a person must be righteous before he can do good works.” This last is an ontological statement, not a forensic one. It is of course true that a person must *be* righteous in order to produce good works. Recall Luther’s Hebrew ontology in which oneness with Christ, or union with Christ, constitutes being.

The *Formula* includes only a brief passing reference regarding the “indwelling of God’s essential righteousness,” stating negatively that it “is not the righteousness of faith of which St. Paul speaks and which he calls the righteousness of God, on account of which we are declared just before God.” It is obvious that the writers of the *Formula* were stuck on the forensic nature of imputed righteousness, which was all they could see in the Pauline corpus, and were unable to articulate what the Finnish scholars refer to as Luther’s understanding of “donated” righteousness (or *lahja vanhurskaus*—“gifted righteousness”), which is the righteousness of the indwelling Christ. That inability has plagued Lutheranism ever since, which is why there has been little appreciation for, and much opposition to, the kind of spiritual life instinctively fostered among Lutheran pietists. What the Finns refer to as “donated” or “gifted” righteousness, Adventists refer to as “imparted” righteousness.

For Lutheran pietists 1 Peter 1:4 was most significant: “For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” For them to become “partakers of the divine nature” was not understood forensically but ontologically.

¹⁰ *Union With Christ*, 71.

¹¹ Solid Declaration, Article III.

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The Presence of Christ in Faith. The key idea in the Finnish insight into Luther is that “in faith itself Christ is really present” (Mannermaa).¹² This represents a radical departure from the contemporary Lutheran concept of forensic justification, largely based on the *Formula of Concord*, in which Christ for us was separated from Christ in us. As we shall see, this insight into Luther articulates his belief that by faith the believer receives the righteousness of God. The believer is not only declared righteous (forensic) because of the work of Christ on Calvary, but receives Christ’s righteousness by faith and thereby becomes righteous. The language of this insight into Luther, says Carl Braaten, “falls like

¹² While the Mannermaa school of Luther scholars has revised contemporary Luther research, the idea of the indwelling Christ, or Christ as present in faith, has been part of Finnish Lutheran Christianity for some time. The roots go back as far as the revivalist Paavo Ruotsalainen, who in 1799 was counseled by a blacksmith with the words, “One thing you lack and with it everything, the inward knowledge of Christ.” Commenting on this event, Walter J. Kukkonen says: “Like Luther, Paavo now referred all matters of life and doctrine to Jesus Christ, not just to the ‘Christ for us,’ which can be a purely intellectual matter, but above all to the ‘Christ in us,’ the Christ who is the Christian’s righteousness, the Christ for whose sake God justifies the ungodly” (*The Inward Knowledge of Christ* [Helsinki: Publications of the Luther-Agricola Society, 1977], 7). The concept can be found in more recent times as well. “Luther was not satisfied with a historical faith in Christ. The historical standpoint keeps Christ in the past. For Luther, to whom pastoral care and practical Christianity were always the main thing, this was not enough. It was most important that Christ be seen as one who is present. His words in the *Commentary on Galatians* are characteristic of his view: ‘Faith justifies because Christ is present’ (*Iustificat fides, quia Christus adest*). In faith and for faith Christ is really present” (Lennart Pinomaa, trans. from the Finnish by Walter J. Kukkonen, *Faith Victorious* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963], 59-60.). With respect to sanctification, Pinomaa articulates Luther’s view by saying that “The struggle for holiness is carried on in faith and involves Christ, who is really present, and our total self” (72). The idea of the indwelling Christ, or union with Christ, is also present in the religious thought of Martti Simojoki, former archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Finland, whose spiritual roots were in the revival movement of the late 1700’s called the Awakened and who appreciated the views of Ruotsalainen. See his devotional book *The Struggle for Wholeness*, trans. by Walter J. Kukkonen, (Tucson: Polaris, 1989), 38, 203. Kukkonen, writing about the theological factors that shaped the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Suomi Synod, said “the saving act of God is an *actus purus*, independent of man’s merits or efforts, but it is not merely a forensic event, for it involves the individual in his relationship to God and his fellow men. Sanctification, then, becomes the mirror which reflects justification, a sign of living faith. There is both the ‘Christ for us’ and the ‘Christ in us.’” (*The Lutheran Quarterly*, 11/1 (February 1958): 43.) The idea of union with Christ is present in other Protestant theologians as well. Consider this: “If it be now asked, *Why* is it so vital to keep the conception of union with Christ in the centre? The answer is clear. For one thing, to assign to this fact any place other than the centre is to endanger the whole doctrine of atonement. The redemption achieved by Christ becomes something that operates mechanically or almost magically: it is altogether outside of us, independent of our attitude . . . It is certain that such an idea as justification, for instance, can only be gravely misleading, when it is not seen in the light of a union with Christ in which the sinner identifies himself with Christ in His attitude to sin. Similarly, the thoughts of sanctification, dissociated from union, loses all reality . . . Only when union with Christ is kept central is sanctification seen in its true nature, as the unfolding of Christ’s own character within the believer’s life; and only then can the essential relationship between religion and ethics be understood. In short, the whole meaning of the atonement is at stake” (James S. Stewart, *A Man In Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul’s Religion*, [New York: Harper, n.d.], 152-153).

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a thud on Lutheran ears accustomed to hearing from Luther chiefly what echoes their Lutheran tradition.”¹³ It will fall like a thud on some Adventist ears as well, and those of some of Adventism’s critics.

Luther wrote, “Christ is God’s grace, mercy, righteousness, truth, wisdom, power, comfort, and salvation, given to us by God without any merit on our part. Christ, I say, not as some express it in blind words, ‘causally,’ so that he grants righteousness and remains absent himself, for that would be dead. Yes, it is not given at all unless Christ himself is present, just as the radiance of the sun and the heat of fire are not present if there is no sun and no fire.”¹⁴ All of the attributes (properties) of God are present in the person of Christ. The Finnish scholars have recognized that central to Luther’s thought is that God must become present in the believer through faith if He is to give him/her His gifts of life and salvation.

It is by His very nature that God becomes really present. Faith results in union with God because He becomes present in us the very moment He creates faith. He lives and works His will in us not as an idea, but as really present. On the basis of this understanding of the presence of Christ in faith, a believer can participate in God’s essential goodness, which is love, and become loving. Redemption, therefore, does not happen only on the cross, but *in* believers in whom Christ dwells by faith. The Christ who is present in faith transforms the believer into His own likeness. In this way the believer participates in the attributes of Christ. The presence of Christ in faith, therefore, is the basis of sanctification. The inward knowledge, or knowing, of Christ has a sanctifying effect.¹⁵ This

¹³ *Union With Christ*, viii.

¹⁴ Quoted by Mannermaa in *Union With Christ*, 15-16. Calvin’s thinking is similar to Luther’s: “So long as we are without Christ and separate from Him, nothing which He did and suffered for the human race is of the least benefit to us. To communicate to us the blessings which He received from the Father, He must become ours and dwell within us” (*Institutes*, III.1.1).

¹⁵ See Luther’s *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg, 1960), in which he says that “to preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching” (280), and that faith “unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom” (286). He says “a man is abundantly and sufficiently justified inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he needs, except insofar as this faith and these riches must grow from day to day [sanctification] even to the future life [glorification]; yet he remains in this mortal life on earth” (294). He proposes to “examine more profoundly that grace which our inner man has in Christ” (288). In the section in which Luther speaks of the believer’s good works, he says, “Surely we are named [Christians] after Christ, not because he is absent from us, but because he dwells in us . . .” (305). Luther’s understanding is not the Roman Catholic teaching in which the sanctifying grace of God is *infused* into the believer by means of sacraments, and which then becomes meritorious and therefore the basis of justification. The error of Catholicism is not that the sinner is renewed inwardly by grace, but that such inward renewal gives the sinner merit before God. In all fairness it must be acknowledged that the emphasis in the *Formula of Concord* on the forensic aspect of justification was in reaction to the views of Andreas Osiander (1498-1552), who held that by virtue of Christ’s divine nature the believer is justified by His sanctifying presence rather than by His saving merits. It is unfortunate that this rejection of Osiander’s view, while necessary under the circumstances in sixteenth century Germany, ultimately resulted in the one-sided position of the *Formula* and of much

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view has been historically denied by many Lutherans in general, with some exceptions, and the consequence has been the loss of theological characteristics that would help them understand the Seventh-day Adventist belief that obedience is a fruit of faith.

Furthermore, on the basis of these recent insights into Luther, it cannot be claimed that justification and sanctification are distinct theological categories but must be understood as equally significant aspects of the salvation process.

Grace and Gift. One of the Finnish scholars, professor Simo Peura, recognizes that “One of the most difficult problems to be solved in Lutheran theology concerns the relation between the forensic and the effective aspects of Justification. The question is crucial above all for Lutheran identity.”¹⁶ While the problem has been forced to their attention by ecumenical dialogue, this acknowledgement should be most welcome to Seventh-day Adventists. Peura says “The two aspects of justification are expressed in Luther’s theology in his conceptions of grace (*gratia, favor*) and gift (*donum*). One indicates that a sinner is forensically declared righteous, and the other that he is made effectively righteous.”¹⁷

Luther’s understanding of the relationship between grace and gift is based on Romans 5:15-17, especially verse 17, which reads: “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” In this text we see that the grace of God and the gift are identical, righteousness given to believers through Christ. Righteousness replaces sin in the believer, and thus he/she is purified.

Following the *Formula of Concord*, orthodox Lutherans have insisted that justification involves primarily imputed righteousness, the declaration of the forgiveness of sin. That belief is reflected in the liturgical order for confession and absolution, when the minister says to the congregation: “Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sin. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ What is not included in the traditional Lutheran doctrine, as understood by many contemporary Lutheran theologians, is the renewal of the believer, and the removal of sin. When the *Formula* speaks of gift, it means correct knowledge of Christ and the assurance based on the knowledge that God considers believers righteous be-

subsequent Lutheran theology. The *Formula* failed to address the significance of either Luther’s or Paul’s emphasis on the indwelling Christ and union with Christ.

¹⁶ Simo Peura, “Christ as Favor and Gift (*donum*): The Challenge of Luther’s Understanding of Justification” in *Union With Christ*, 42.

¹⁷ Ibid, 42. In footnote #1 on page 42, Peura, commenting on the ecumenical dialogue with Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians, observes that “We Lutherans will encounter great difficulties if we try to represent only the forensic aspect of Justification.”

¹⁸ *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 56, 77, 98.

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cause of Christ's obedience. Excluded from gift are everything that Luther included in it: regeneration, renewal, and, above all, Christ's presence in the believer. This exclusion was based on the philosophical assumption that God's being is separated from His effects. Therefore, with reference to the doctrine of justification, much of post-*Formula* Lutheran theology failed to consider the ontological dimension. All the justified believer can claim by faith is that he understands he has a new (legal) position, or standing, before God. What happens to the believer happens only in his mind.

In contrast to this, professor Peura's study of Luther's thought leads him to say:

Justification is not only a change of self-understanding, a new relation to God, or a new ethos of love. God changes the sinner ontologically in the sense that he or she participates in God and in his divine nature, being made righteous . . . This interpretation is based on the thesis that both grace and gift are a righteousness given in Christ to a Christian. This donation presupposes that Christ is really present and that he indwells the believer. Christ on the one hand is the grace that is given to the sinner that protects him against the wrath of God (the forensic aspect), and on the other hand he is the gift that renews and makes the sinner righteous (the effective aspect). All this is possible only if Christ is united with the sinner through the sinner's faith.¹⁹

Based on this understanding of Luther, it can no longer be said that his central teaching was justification by faith. Faith *in* Christ does not itself justify; rather it is Christ who gives faith and who is *present in faith* who justifies the sinner. In other words, when the sinner is united to Christ in faith, he receives the forgiveness of sin and Christ's righteousness as a divine gift of grace (Romans 5:15-17). Furthermore, there is no justification outside of personal faith and union with Christ. For Luther, then, union with Christ is essential for salvation. As Peura says, "Thus the basic starting point of Luther's interpretation of Romans 5:15 (*gratia Dei et donum in gratia*) is as follows: Christ himself is grace and gift. Christ himself is the grace that covers a sinner and hides him from God's wrath, and Christ himself is the gift that renews the sinner internally and makes him righteous. This occurs, then, when Christ unites himself with a sinner."²⁰

Conclusion

Whereas the Finnish scholars discovered that union with Christ is central to Luther's doctrine of justification, Seventh-day Adventists, together with Luther, discovered it in Scripture. The Adventist discovery is affirmed by Ellen G. White. Therefore, neither Lutheran nor Adventist theologians can afford to dis-

¹⁹ *Union With Christ*, 48.

²⁰ *Union With Christ*, 53.

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count or ignore the significant contribution of Ellen G. White with regard to Christ our righteousness.

According to Daniels, the “one sublime message” is Christ our righteousness. Why is it so sublime? Ellen G. White wrote, speaking of the disciples, “After the Saviour’s ascension, the sense of the divine presence, full of love and light, was still with them. It was a personal presence. . . . The light and love and power of an indwelling Christ shone out through them, so that men, beholding, marveled.”²¹

Ellen G. White writes in a way similar to Luther. On the surface there appears to be no evidence of what is classically referred to as a “systematic” theology. For many trained theologians this absence has led to the discounting of Ellen G. White as a theological thinker to be taken seriously. She is considered primarily as a devotional writer and a valued counselor, rather than as a theological thinker.

Many Luther scholars have become bored with Luther, assuming that he has nothing more to say and that a continued poring over his works will produce nothing new. The Finnish scholars have brought excitement back into Luther research, and he is once again an open book! Perhaps the same needs to happen to Seventh-day Adventists relative to Ellen G. White, learning anew to appreciate her as a theological thinker. We need to rediscover, as the Finnish Luther scholars have, that the old stuff is still the best stuff (that is to say the classic literature)!

Luther insists that union with Christ is *effected* in baptism, the precondition being the preaching of the Word. For Luther baptism becomes valid when the Word, Christ, joins with water.²² For Seventh-day Adventists baptism signifies that which has already been effected by grace through faith, namely union with Christ, illustrating and demonstrating that fact. The Adventist view is more Christological than sacramental. Still, there are similarities between the two understandings of baptism.

Ellen G. White says that a person baptized “receives the imprint of God by baptism” and that we should always remember that “upon them the Lord has placed His signature, declaring them to be His sons and daughters.”²³ Thus, in her view, the primary actor in baptism is God, not the one being baptized or the minister baptizing. However, while God takes the initiative in baptism, instead of effecting union with Christ, baptism confirms and affirms what has already been given by grace and received by faith, namely, Christ our righteousness.²⁴

²¹ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 65.

²² WA 37:627-72.

²³ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953), 6:1075.

²⁴ This is also the reason why Adventists hold to adult baptism instead of infant baptism. This view of Ellen G. White concerning God’s initiative in baptism, which is not quite the same as the traditional believers baptism, has never been seriously considered by Seventh-day Adventist theo-

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It is only on the basis that the believer has by faith received Christ and, thereby, His righteousness, that the church is able to expect the baptized to exhibit evidence of the Christlike life. Christ, by indwelling the believer, takes the place of the life of sin. If baptism were only a human act, lack of evidence of the new birth would be natural and expected. But because baptism is also, and primarily, an act of God, such evidence of transformation is not only possible but is to be expected.

Here we see that the Adventist understanding of baptism as it relates to union with Christ, and the recent Finnish insights into Luther, are quite similar. However, that the baptized dies in regard to sin, and that a newborn Christian is raised up from the watery grave, is most adequately illustrated by immersion, which liturgically demonstrates its meaning.

Because of the Finnish Luther research, Geoffrey J. Paxton (Anglican) will have to revise his analysis of what he has termed the crisis among Adventists over the doctrine of justification.²⁵ Furthermore, Desmond Ford will have to reconsider his endorsement of Paxton's analysis as well.²⁶

Paxton claims that when Luther presented his lectures on Romans (1515), he was "still the evangelical Catholic," but by the time he presented his lectures on Galatians (1535), he was "the Protestant Reformer."²⁷ However, Reinhold Seeberg devastates Paxton's reasoning when he writes:

The differences between the 'first form' and the later forms of Luther's theology are commonly very much exaggerated. If we consider the technical terminology, there is indeed a manifest difference; but if we have in view the actual content and logical results of his ideas, we can scarcely reach any other conclusion than that Luther had before A. D. 1517 already grasped the conceptions and attained the points of view which gave character to his life-work. . . . it is most important of all to observe that he, at the very beginning of his career, makes practical application of his new idea of faith; for the leverage of Luther's reformatory principle lies, not in justification, nor in a new theory of grace, but in the conviction that faith is the *form* of true religion.²⁸

If we lean in the direction of the traditional Lutheran doctrine of forensic justification, we will find ourselves in the unfortunate position of being tempted to abandon the one sublime truth upon which all else depends: Christ our righteousness. Salvation by grace through faith involves both that which Christ has done for us on Calvary, and that which He does in us by virtue of His indwelling

gians. Her view is far more theocentric/Christocentric than anthropocentric. (See C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song!: Worship Renewal for Adventists Today* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1984), 60-69.)

²⁵ *The Shaking of Adventism*, (Grand Rapids: Baker), 1977.

²⁶ "The Truth of Paxton's Thesis," *Spectrum*, 9/3.

²⁷ *The Shaking of Adventism*, 37.

²⁸ *History of Doctrine*, III.I.I, (Grand Rapids: Baker), 223,

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presence. Paul said that the believer's "hope of glory" is "Christ in you" (Col. 1:27).

Furthermore, with respect to the debate over the relationship between justification and sanctification, neither Paxton nor Ford recognized that sanctification does not take place outside the believer.

While post-*Formula* Lutheranism employed forensic justification in opposition to the Catholic concept of grace infused in the believer by means of sacraments and the ministry of priests, Luther himself focused on the indwelling Christ and union with Christ, identifying justification with the presence of Christ in faith. For Luther, and for Seventh-day Adventists, the righteousness which Christ imparts to the believer by virtue of His indwelling presence is always an alien righteousness. The sinner can never claim righteousness on the basis of his/her own merits, only on the merits of Christ.

Carl Braaten concludes that "In the future Luther-scholarship around the world will have to be in dialogue with the Finnish picture of Luther . . ." ²⁹ Seventh-day Adventist Luther scholars, as well as Adventist participants in theological discussions with Lutherans, will also have to be conversant with the new Finnish insights.

While we welcome these new Finnish insights which confirm our own understanding of Christ our righteousness and affirm that we are definitely in the Reformation stream when it comes to justification, we do not see, in the same sense Braaten does, that they hold promise "for visible church unity." ³⁰ He, as Executive Director of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology and a prominent contemporary ecumenist, is of course speaking of Lutheran/Catholic unity. However, the fact that this new Luther research was motivated by ecumenical concerns does not lessen the significance of the discoveries, which have challenged a century of scholarly opinion concerning a foundational doctrine of Protestant theology.

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²⁹ *Union With Christ*, 75.

³⁰ *Ibid.*